



Age-Old Practice with Timeless Benefits

By Doug Zlatin, Community Wellness Committee Member

Would you be interested in a technique that improves spiritual, physical and mental health that can be done at no cost in the comfort of home with no special equipment in 20 minutes or less a day? Meditation is such a practice. An estimated 200-500 million people meditate globally, and, in 2018 just over fourteen percent of the U.S. population tried it, with that number tripling in just five years.¹

Meditation is a centuries-old tradition rooted in Eastern spiritual practices that has become increasingly popular in Western culture over the past fifty years. Modern life can be chaotic and fast-paced, contributing to high levels of stress and tension. We can be so busy planning for the future or worrying about the past that we fail to live in the present. Meditation cultivates the ability to focus on the here and now and let go of what is troubling or painful. A regular meditation practice can help you become calmer, more centered and more accepting of self and others. Studies show that meditation helps: manage stress, lower blood pressure, mitigate anxiety and depression, lessen pain, improve self-awareness, increase attention and concentration, manage addictions, treat eating disorders, and improve sleep, among other benefits.²

The “how to” of meditation is quite simple. Start by creating a relaxed, undisturbed space, sitting in an erect but comfortable posture, and choosing a place to focus your attention. Many beginners use their breath, counting (perhaps to ten) each inhale and exhale, then starting again. Eyes may be closed or slightly open but unfocused. You may also use a word, mantra, prayer, mental image or the mind itself (mindfulness-based meditation) to focus on.

What can make meditation challenging is that undisciplined minds tend to wander from the point of focus to a myriad of distracting thoughts, body sensations, emotions, fantasies or memories. This is normal. When it happens, simply note it and return attention to your focal point. You may have to do this countless times during a meditation session but rest assured that this repeating process of gently letting go and re-focusing is the essential element of a meditation practice. By sticking with it, you can develop a powerful tool to defeat the devastating effects of stress and live life more fully with greater awareness. The benefits of feeling centered and in control of thoughts and emotions can not only improve your own health and quality of life, but also lead to more positive and rewarding relationships with others. In the author’s experience, meditation is one of the best investments in health and well-being that one can make.

There are many guided meditations online and groups to join. Next week, you're invited to a free workshop for first-timers, as well as the more experienced: "Meditation for the Ever-Beginner," guided by Susan Lebel Young, Saturday, January 14, 10:30 a.m. to noon, Russell Room, Falmouth Memorial Library. Find more information from Susan here: <https://www.falmouthme.org/community-wellness-committee>

¹[28 Meditation Statistics: How Many People Meditate?](#) ²[Meditation and Mindfulness: What You Need to Know](#)